Delft.

The Art of Vermeer of Delft

VERMEER OF DELFT. By E. V. Lucas. George H. Doran Company.

THIS brief but comprehensive monograph on the life and pictures of Jan Vermeer of Delft is an enchanting study of the work of a man who was the purest flower of seventeenth century Dutch art. It tells all the few known facts of Vermeer's life; it names and describes all his acknowledged thirty-seven paintings; it is not made unintelligible to the general reader by use and abuse of technical art terms, and, what is even more remarkable for an Englishman writing about an internationally owned painter, it recognizes that some of the best Vermeers are owned in the United States, to which Mr. Lucas adds another uncommon credit to himself. He has seen most of those owned here, names and describes them.

Aside from all the facts he sets down about Vermeer and his pictures—and facts, after all, are the most important things about art, although a younger generation of art writers pretend to ignore facts much as a younger generation of painters ignore drawing as unimportant—the delightful thing about Mr. Lucas's text is his genuinely passionate admiration for the work of his subject. Thus he says: "Writing in another place some years ago, I ventured to call the Mauritshuis picture of a girl's head 'one of the most beautiful things in Holland.' I retract that statement now and instead say quite calmly that it is *the* most beautiful thing in Holland. And to me it is in many ways not only the most beautiful thing in Holland but the most satisfying and exquisite product of brush and color that I have anywhere seen. The painting of the lower lip is as much a miracle to me as a Darwin tulip."

If the reader of the book has never seen the "Head of a Young Girl" in the museum at The Hague he can form some impression of it from the reproduction of the painting which serves as a frontispiece to this study. There are thirteen reproductions of Vermeer's paintings in all in the book, of a somewhat uneven quality of half-tone work, but the frontispiece has the good fortune to be singularly good. It conveys some measure of the source of Mr. Lucas's enthusiasm as do the reproductions of "A Woman Reading a Letter," of "A Lady Writing a Letter" and of the most exquisite "Mistress and Servant," now in the Frick collection in this city.

The outstanding difference between this writer on art and most writers on art is that while they try to be profound Mr. Lucas is only human. He shows this in his analysis of the reasons as to why Vermeer should have been in debt to his baker, but better still in giving his reason as to why the writer believes there must be more than thirty-seven of Vermeer's paintings somewhere in the world. Lucas points out that if Vermeer had only painted four pictures a year between 1652, when he was 20, and 1675, when he died—"this would give him a total of ninety-two pictures, or over fifty more than we know of." He tells the story of the "Spinner," which was known to have been in England in 1865, and goes on to reason about the different kinds of pictures Vermeer painted, such as his one landscape, his one street scene, one real portrait, one kitchen scene and one purely classical subject. And in his sense of bafflement over the mystery of the missing Vermeers which must have been painted, he says: "The loneliness of these examples fills one with fury. No painter, and especially no painter with such an interest in the difficulties of his art . . . and moreover a man with many children and a clamorous baker—no painter paints only one landscape." And, by the same analogy, Mr. Lucas reasons that no painter would also paint only one portrait, one street scene, one kitchen scene and one purely classical subject. Vermeer, he admits, may have destroyed some. But then, he asks again, "where are the others?" And he suggests that some of our millionaires ought to spend a part of their millions in hunting out the missing pictures of Vermeer which Mr. Lucas believes must be in existence. What a hunt that would be! And what glory in its possible rewards!

Sir Charles J. Holmes, director of the British National Gallery, contributes an admirable introduction to the monograph in which he gives his impressions of the manner in which Vermeer worked in painting his pictures. Sir Charles, be it said, is the only writer on art we know, in addition to Philip Gilbert Hamerton, who appreciated the sheer ability of carriage painters for their skill in applying paint. He does this here by showing that Vermeer's skill with his "edges" bore a close relation to the highly specialized craft of coach painting in the past.

A Dance of Java.

Eastern Dance and Drama

DANCING AND THE DRAMA: EAST AND WEST. By Stella Bloch. With an introduction by Ananda Coomaraswamy. New York: Orientalia.

IN the introduction (dated at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) to this brief but informing essay upon Eastern dance and drama it is pointed out that Miss Bloch, who is herself a trained dancer, speaks definitely of what she has seen in the East; and her observations can be justified by reference to the technical literature.

Oriental art, as we see, is not an escape from life but "a part of life itself in the same sense as the art of preparing a meal or designing a motor car." The art of modern Europe is wholly different. Prof. Lethaby has remarked that "at its best its various expressions are but one man deep." But behind the Asiatic craftsman stands the race.

Miss Bloch makes very clear the distinction between the Asiatic and the European drama. "Art is in its essence an interpretation of life and subject to the prejudice of the individual artist, but the [Asiatic] drama is life itself speaking through the crafts and by means of a whole inspired race." The Eastern theater exists only for the many and varied expressions of "The Great Tale," for the presentation by puppets of the adventures of the gods and of great men. The actor has no individuality; he is but a single piece in the great orchestra, and his office is to express, classically, the mighty music as it is written. The different presentations, by drama and dance, of China, Java, Cambodia and Bali are outlined and illustrated with highly significant sketches.

Back From 'Beyond the Veil'

COMMUNICATION WITH THE NEXT WORLD. By William T. Stead. Edited by Estelle W. Stead. George H. Doran Company.

THIS is a book declared to have been written by a dead man. The human compiler professes to be only the editor; the credit for its authorship is given to her father, a well known spiritualist who perished on the Titanic in 1912. In other words, the author is supposed to have come back from "beyond the veil" and to have dictated the book to a medium—a procedure so extraordinary that one's attention is immediately attracted to the volume, whether or not one finds one's self ready to accept its conclusions.

These conclusions, to confess the truth, are not so extraordinary as the nature of the work might lead one to anticipate. They are concerned mostly with the conducting of seances, and describe what are claimed to be the proper and improper methods of communicating with spirits. But here and there one finds some highly interesting if apparently fantastic statements regarding life in the next world. It is as difficult, we are told, for spirits to come back to earth as it is for the living to invade the spiritual realm; the sensations of spirits are vastly different from those of men, and souls on the highest plane of being find themselves so exalted and so far removed from earthly interests that communication with the living is impossible. Even to those spirits who hover near this world the appearances of things have become radically altered; people do not stand forth as flesh and bone but as "mind and spirit"; "magnetic waves, thoughts and feelings vibrate from them"; and "they are beautiful or ugly, brilliant or dull, or of intermediate degree, according to their state of soul."

In the after world, according to the author, there are many planes of being, none of which bears any close resemblance to that with which we are acquainted. Spirits in the lowest stage find conditions remotely similar to those they were accustomed to on earth, but "the nobler and more developed souls have a life of thought and feeling which surpasses in delight anything you can imagine." Many, however, are unable to attain to a knowledge of that supreme state and whirl about aimlessly as the shades whom Dante saw tossed hither and thither like dead leaves. In the earth's atmosphere there is an innumerable throng of such spirits, wandering desolately in search of light on earth and rushing tumultuously to any spot where there is a possibility of making themselves known.

All this, of course, is more imaginative than convincing, more gratifying to one's sense of poetry than of truth. The fundamental failing of the book seems to be that it is lacking in definiteness; that it presents no ideas that a person of a fanciful turn of mind might not have conceived for himself. This is not to imply that the book does not set forth the facts, for the facts themselves may be indefinite and impossible to establish; it is only to say that it presents the claims of spiritualism so inconclusively that one must withhold judgment pending further evidence.

The Shelley Centenary will be celebrated at the Haymarket Theater in London, England, on Friday afternoon, July 7. Brief addresses will be given by distinguished literary men and recitations from Shelley by well known actors. The meeting is being arranged by Sir Reynold Rodd, Sir Harold Boulton, Lord Crewe, Sir Sidney Colvin, Mr. Gosse and others.

A Dance of Cambodia.